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Safe Houses and Such, in Capital's Backyard

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 — When he announced his decision to return to the Soviet Union on Monday, Vitaly Yurchenko shed some light on the normally secret world of safe houses and intelligence sites.

"It's not my secret, it is your secret," Mr. Yurchenko told reporters while describing the house provided him by the Central Intelligence Agency some 22 miles from Fredicksburg, Va., on a 500-acre subdivision with a lake.

Mr. Yurchenko's temporary home in Virginia, like many other C.I.A. sites, is convenient to agency headquarters in McLean, Va., but sufficiently obscure to meet the secretive requirements of intelligence work.

As might be expected, the C.I.A. does not advertise its installations.

"We simply don't talk about the location of any of our facilities," Patti Volz, a C.I.A. spokesman, said.

But interviews with present and former intelligence officials as well a number of published reports reveal that the C.I.A. uses various Virginia locations to house defectors as well as train agents, provide paramilitary support or handle agency trust funds.

The Washington area is not the only location for safe houses or other intelligence installations; they are scattered throughout the country and some are overseas in critical East-West junctions such as Berlin and Vienna, according to intelligence officials. Furthermore, other agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, maintain safe houses of their own, officials said.

But northern Virginia is a favorite location for the C.I.A., which in addition to its McLean headquarters has offices in places like Rosslyn, Va.

One former intelligence official said the C.I.A. maintains several safe houses in northern Virginia, some rented, some owned, for debriefing Soviet bloc defectors. The houses are within an hour's drive of McLean, he said, "because you don't want an officer wasting time driving a long way" or exposing himself any more than is necessary.

Former intelligence officials also described a C.I.A. training camp near Williamsburg, Va., called the Farm. The camp is actually part of a sprawling military installation, Camp Peary, on the banks of the York River. The C.I.A. has used the camp for a variety of purposes, including paramilitary training for agents and debriefing of defectors.

Since Camp Peary is more than 100 miles from Washington, the C.I.A. has used a local Washington aviation company to shuttle officials between the two, as well as a number of other locations, according to former officials.

The C.I.A. also uses a number of corporate entities, ranging from fully operational businesses controlled by the C.I.A., called proprietaries, to shell companies, which perform little business but are used for cover, to contractual arrangements with various fraternal corporations.

Many of these organizations are based in Washington or northern Virginia. For example, an aircraft leasing corporation with contractual ties to the C.I.A. and staffed by former C.I.A. officials operates near Dulles Airport in northern Virginia, according to present and former intelligence officials. However, the company has an unlisted telephone number and its office is not traceable.

The C.I.A. has divested itself of many of its proprietary holdings, especially aircraft companies. A Senate report noted that the C.I.A.'s largest proprietaries were two air support companies, which were dissolved, and an insurance company, which was not disbanded and which handles trust funds and insurance.

But the agency still maintains shadowy links to the companies that absorbed the C.I.A. assets, according to intelligence officials and the 1976 report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

"In a very real sense, it is nearly impossible to evaluate whether a 'link' still exists between the agency and a former asset related to a proprietary," the Senate report said.

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